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EXCLUSIVELY YOURS

LBJ and Bob Hope Smash Hits

By BETTY BEALE

Star Staff Writer

Lyndon Johnson got off some good ones. Bob Hope made fun of the Democrats in front of LBJ. One thousand persons hung on their every word. And the evening ended in the dramatic singing of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in a darkened room by Anita Bryant backed up by the whole Army Chorus.

The USO "Salute to Bob Hope" dinner celebrating its 25th anniversary was, in a word, a smash.

How could it fail with the country's No. 1 citizen and No. 1 comedian swapping cracks; with John Daly acting as emcee; with Harvey Firestone courageously rising from his wheelchair and, despite his slow-mending broken hip, delivering his speech as chairman on his two feet; with handsome, square-jawed Walter Hoving, president of Tiffany's, giving the inside picture of its beginnings when the late John D. Rockefeller, Al Smith and others all pitched in; with famed Gen. "Rosie" O'Donnell — who is so "tough he gets fan mail from John Wayne," said Hope — speaking as USO president; and with Joan Crawford, glittering in white satin and dripping diamonds from her ears with gobs of them around her neck, shining like a beacon at the head table?

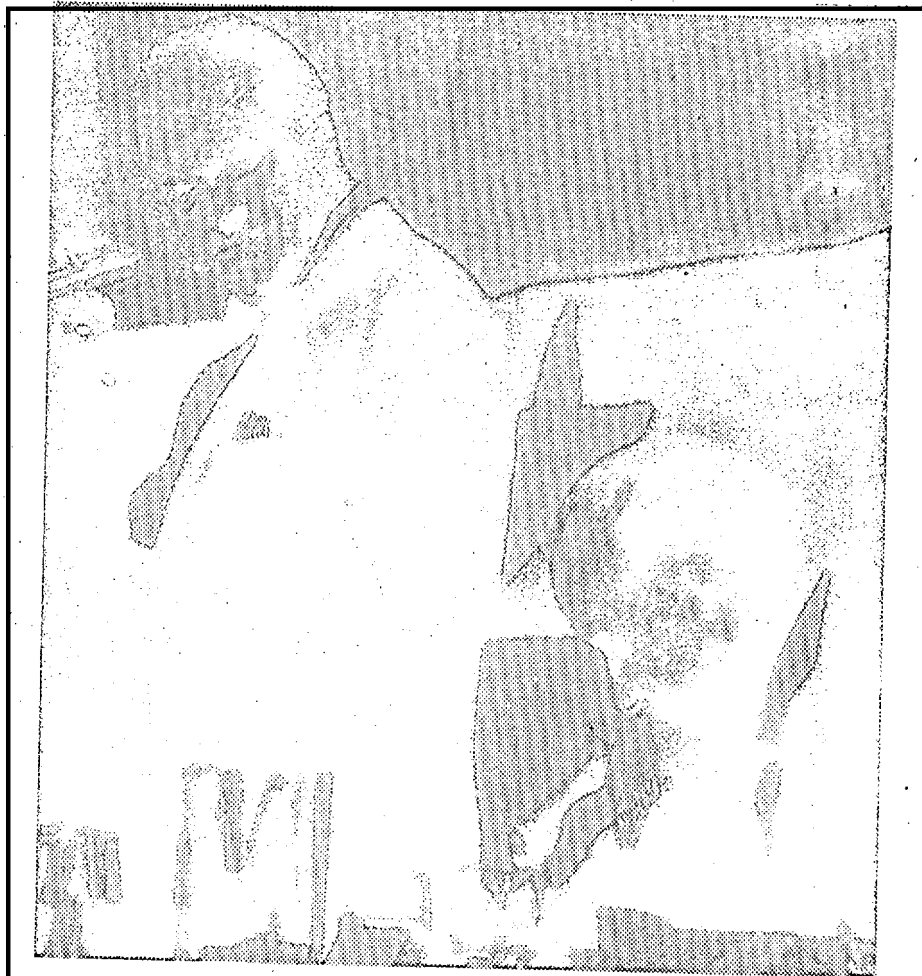
PRESIDENT JOHNSON strode into the huge ballroom of the Washington Hilton at 10:17 p.m., heralded by "Hail to the Chief" played by the Marine Band. Introduced at once, he said he had come "to honor a man with two very unusual traits."

He's an actor who isn't so far as I know — at least now — running for public office. And he is a frequent visitor to Viet Nam who has never been asked to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee. At least not yet." "I understand he was planning to testify," he continued when the chuckles subsided, "until he discovered there was live coverage on only one network. That wasn't the

friendly network. It isn't that he wanted the additional exposure. It's just that he refused to go up against the 'I Love Lucy' rating without help."

"Our late beloved President



—United Press International

Bob Hope tickles President Johnson with a joke as the Chief Executive breaks out in laughter during the USO's 25th anniversary dinner saluting Hope last night. The President dropped in unexpectedly.

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John Kennedy used to say jokes, otherwise the resemblance would be hell to bear." "I want to congratulate Stu. I understand that his son Jim has just been appointed chief of protocol. It just proves that blood is thicker than civil service." Noting that it was Jim who arranged the visit of Indira Gandhi, Hope cracked: "It wasn't easy to get Sen. Fulbright to lie on a bed of nails."

HE THEN MUSED ON USO's AGE. "Twenty-five years. Just think Cassius Clay was just born—a six-pound mouth. Wasn't that a shame about Cassius? He opened his mouth and got caught in the draft. The whole thing gives me a warm feeling," said the patriotic comedian.

"It's a tough war," he continued. "Perry Mason was over there, and he couldn't solve it. . . . I don't need this reward. I have had my kicks too many times in emotional treats. . . . I shall accept the award in the spirit it was given. I shall ignore that it was for leaving the country. . . . Having the President here makes the year for me." It was quite something, he said, "to leave the store like that with nobody to watch it but Sen. Morse."

"I know he gave up a lot to be here—a George Hamilton movie," wound up Hope in the laughter and applause of 1,000.

Earlier in the proceedings, Firestone was presented with the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service by Assistant Secretary of Defense Thomas Morris, on behalf of Secretary McNamara. As national chairman of USO ever since 1951, Firestone "attracted

many competent officials to serve" in USO during the Korean conflict, helped to solve the "unique problems" of that war, and had "materially contributed to the success of the USO programs, the citation read.

Hope, who referred to his golf game at Burning Tree yesterday with Symington, Dan Kimball, chairman of the dinner, and Adm. William Raborn, CIA box, complained earlier about missing two shots. But Symington said he had five straight pars.

At the Symington table besides Jim and his wife were the Eugene Carusis, Rep. Bill Hull, Lily Guest and the Ben Bradlees. Mrs. Clark Clifford, at a table with her daughter and son-in-law, the Dick Barretts and Dr. Lawn Thompson, said it was not true that her husband was seriously ill. He has "a classic case of hepatitis," she said.

Sen. and Mrs. Mike Monroney, en. Warren Magnuson, Adm. Pete Gallatin, Gerald O'Neil, president of General Tire, and Doris Fleeson and her daughter Doris O'Donnell shared a table. Rep. and Mrs. Jake Pickle, Mrs. Dale Miller, whose husband was at the head table, and her daughter and son-in-law, the Stuart Rosses, were at another. Perle Mesta, Mrs. William Fay, wife of the Irish ambassador, Jim Mann, Lt. Gen. and Mrs. Ira Eaker, actor Jerry Colonna and Gen. and Mrs. Tony McAuliffe were others at the successful anniversary of the globe-girdling organization.

"Giving me an award for entertaining servicemen is like giving Richard Burton an award for staying home," cracked the star again.

"It's nice to see Stu Symington here." He glanced at the nearby table where the Missouri senator and his wife had a group of friends. "Stu Symington met us in Viet Nam with a telegram from President Johnson. That's what happens when you elect a Texan for President. Anybody else would have called Western Union."

"Stu is one of the handsomest men in the country."

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